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least seventy thousand people has been provided in Central London. If the improved dwellings in the outskirts are taken into account the number is much larger; but it is safe to say that in the more crowded parts of London seventy thousand are now in homes which have been built as a result of the movement, inaugurated in 1844, by the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes.

EDWARD PORRITT.

THE LOVE OF SCANDAL.

WHO does not remember the greed of the Athenians for news? The love of gossip was one of their most striking characteristics, and "What news?" was as much part of the business of the Agora, when friends met each other at noon, as the "price of fresh fish" or the "condition of the flower girls' violets."

No event was too trivial for them to chronicle, no shifting of life's kaleidoscope too minute for them to follow—nothing, in fact, in public or private, seemed to escape their scrutiny.

Maid, matron, and hetaera, statesman and slave, the favorite poet's latest ode, the fashionable sophist's last oration, what blunder of uncouth simplicity the newest importation from Sparta had committed;—of all things under heaven they discoursed freely, discussing and dissecting without restraint, without stint, as no people have done before or since.

They were the lovers of gossip *par excellence*, and Athens was the paradise of all newsmongers of the time; for neither dramatist nor orator could get a hearing if any should raise the cry, "News! news!" "News from the Hesperides!" "News from the Cassiterides!" "News of Glaucus!" "News of Phyrne!" "Who will hear my news?"

But even the Athenians had their limits, and knew when to forbear; the line of gossip had to be drawn somewhere, if they would not be like their own harpies ravening and befouling all things; and they drew it at the door of the tomb. The dead were as sacred to them as the gods, Hades as impenetrable as Olympus; for much latent delicacy underlay this sunny old-world love of gossip, this chattering, laughing, effervescent delight in personal details.

Yes, although the Athenians were "heathens," in the common acceptance of the term nowadays, they respected the memory of their dead, and we do not. Their qualities of human pity and honor, their sense of fairness, even as man to man, came into play when there was no one present to reply, for they felt that the ghost wandering mournfully in the pale world of shades had still susceptibilities and affections; his wishes were to be carried out as honorably as if he still had power to enforce them; so, too, his weaknesses were to be as lightly touched upon as if he were to be met half an hour hence to discuss with his biographer what had been said of him.

No friend would ever have said, of the dead he had loved and lived with, words which it would have been dishonorable to say to the living, for the same cause as that which makes it impossible for a high-minded gentleman to speak ill of the absent who are unable to defend themselves.

The very helplessness of the dead was their safeguard against indiscretion, as against slander, and "*de mortuis nil nisi bonum*" only expressed the general respect for that helplessness.

But we have changed all that "old-time" honor, all that bygone loyalty of reticence,

We have gone in now for a coarse and cruel chatter which we call eu-

phemistically "candor," but which is in reality nothing but love of scandal, carried to the highest point of indecency.

Now it is the irrepressible interviewer, who lurks in the shadow of the sick-chamber and photographs the details of the death-bed with revolting minuteness; the various stages of disease (it may be) are reported *in extenso*, and surgical and pathological facts flood the magazines and newspapers.

Death is the signal for prying into all corners, publishing every secret, giving forth to the world the most careless as well as the most confidential letters, which no doubt had been dashed off in a moment of unreflecting expansion. Had the deceased committed what the world calls an "indiscretion," the women and children are exhibited in the pages of the memorialist as one exhibits wax figures at a show, and the love which he had cherished in secret and, may be, repented of in agony is beaten out into so many paragraphs of prurient sensationalism, with more hinted at probably than is safe or decent to detail.

Had he an unjust suspicion of men, such as is often the accompaniment of an overworked brain and a diseased body, the expressions used by him on such occasions are scattered abroad, even though a better mind withdrew them before death and there was a full and free reconciliation all round.

Rien n'est sacré pour un sapeur, and nothing is sacred to a biographer of that lower type, in whom the instinct of the jackal and hyena meet.

His articles are written in the tears and blood of his dead friend; but what of that? It gives him both money and renown, and he would have us believe that if he did not positively create the genius which took the generation by storm, or held it breathless in delight, which created a new era in literature or opened a new pathway for science, for statesmanship, or for art, he at least educated, directed, coached, and inspired it. If these are some of the penalties which the illustrious dead have to suffer at the hands of their friends, they fare still worse at the hands of mere acquaintances.

Quem ad finem effrenata audacia jactabit se? Crowds of these men start up like gnats in the evening, round the grave and claim, as their beloved intimate, him who lies dumb and powerless within: him with whom when living they never had more than the most passing, the most superficial intercourse, and would never have been admitted to more. Fancy conversations spreading over all sorts of important topics are reported as having taken place between them; conversations of the gravest moment built on the slender foundations of a passing half-hour's chat; and the most sensitive and reticent of men is suddenly exhibited as a gushing babbler, who gave his confidence unhesitatingly to a chance companion, with neither claim nor merit for such distinction.

Nothing can be in worse taste than all this wretched half-scandalous, half-indelicate gossip. Just as a photograph, where the light has been unskillfully managed, is not like a person because out of drawing and due relation, so the most absolutely exact facts may give a false impression because taken without the context and surroundings belonging to them.

It is not anatomy—it is mutilation and distortion. But it is the fashion nowadays to extol Boswell without understanding him and to justify a bad copy by worth of the original.